A Concise History of BRAZIL

Boris Fausto • Sergio Fausto

SECOND EDITION

A Concise History of Brazil, Second Edition

The second edition of *A Concise History of Brazil* offers a sweeping yet accessible history of Latin America's largest country. Boris Fausto examines Brazil's history from the arrival of the Portuguese in the New World through the long and sometimes rocky transition from independence in 1822 to democracy in the twentieth century. In a completely new chapter, his son Sergio Fausto, a prominent political scientist, brings the history up to the present, focusing on Brazil's increasing global economic importance as well as its continued democratic development and the challenges the country faces to meet the higher expectations of its people.

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A Concise History of Brazil, Second Edition

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To Cynira Stocco Fausto, in memoriam

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PREFACE

Writing a synthetic history of Brazil for an English-language readership entails a set of challenges that I feel I must make explicit.

Beginning with the presupposition that there is scant familiarity with Brazilian history in the English-speaking world, I chose to emphasize historical narrative and introduce my readers to a body of knowledge which I consider fundamental. This choice has obvious advantages. Among them, it avoids taking gaps in readers' knowledge for granted. However, at the same time, to lead readers along a path in a historical narrative is methodologically outdated and could result in a superficial understanding of important events.

I tried to minimize this shortcoming by combining narrative with discussions of central themes in the Brazilian historical process: e.g., the nature of Brazilian slavery, Brazil's remaining united once it became an independent country, and the characteristics of its recent transition from an authoritarian government to a democratic one.

I have also sought to inform readers about the more significant historiographical controversies when such controversies make way for different interpretations of the past as well as when they demonstrate that history is a body of knowledge subject to constant reappraisal and refinement.

As they get into the book, readers will become more aware of my working premises, but there is at least one more that should be made clear. I have rejected two opposing tendencies in discussing the Brazilian historical process. On the one hand, I have rejected

the tendency to consider Brazilian history as an evolutionary trend characterized by constant progress. This is a simplistic point of view that events in recent years have belied. On the other hand, I have also rejected the point of view that emphasizes inertia – that suggests, for example, that problems caused by political patronage, by corruption, and by the state's impositions on society have been the same and have not changed over the years.

Oddly, the latter proclivity has been associated both with revolutionary ideologies and with conservative outlooks. For revolutionaries, their view of political and social domination as, for all intents and purposes, one and the same leads them to the notion that efforts in the interest of gradual change are useless. They prefer abrupt cuts. Conservative thinkers who share this inertial point of view tend to be skeptical of change; or, in their more elaborated thinking, they are in favor of intervention by an authoritarian government whose objective is to impose new directions on the country.

My exposition takes a position contrary to both points of view. On a step-by-step basis, I have attempted to show that in the midst of continuity and accommodation, Brazil changes – sometimes in the political sphere, sometimes socioeconomically, and at times in both arenas.

I should also point out that strictly speaking, cultural manifestations are not the object of this text. This deliberate omission is not meant to slight culture. I have decided to leave out culture because the interrelatedness of sociopolitical and cultural phenomena, owing to their complexity and importance, deserves to be dealt with in a book wholly on that subject.

Taking into account the purpose of this book, I have not included any notes containing marginal observations and references to sources. If this has made the text lighter reading, it has, simultaneously, presented me with a problem. Much of this book is indebted to the work of other authors which I have selected and incorporated for my own purposes. How can I not quote them without being unjust and without running the risk of being accused of plagiarism? I have tried to solve this dilemma in the Bibliography at the end. My references do not exhaust all the sources I consulted and do not mention all the basic bibliography. I have included only

those texts I consulted in the writing of this book. Of course, my using them indicates that I consider them important.

Finally, I would like to thank my friend and colleague Herbert S. Klein, whose suggestions and considerations encouraged me to write this book.

Map 1 Brazil. Reprinted with permission from *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, © 1986).

Fr.
N A
Belém
Bragança
São Luís
Rosário
Fortaleza
MARANHÃO
CEARÁ
RIO GRANDE DO NORTE
Natal
P A R Á
PIAUÍ
PARAÍBA
PERNAMBUCO
Recife
ALAGOAS
SERGIPE
R. São Francisco
BAHIA
Salvador
GOIÁS
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
MINAS GERAIS
Belo Horizonte
ESPÍRITO SANTO
Victória
Ribeirão Preto
SÃO PAULO
Campinas
Campos
RIO DE JANEIRO
Rio de Janeiro
São Paulo
Santos
PARANÁ
Paranaguá
SANTA CATARINA
RIO GRANDE DO SUL
Porto Alegre
Rio Grande
0
800 km
0
500 miles

1

Colonial Brazil (1500–1822)

1.1 OVERSEAS EXPANSION AND THE PORTUGUESE ARRIVAL IN BRAZIL

The Portuguese reached the coast of what today is Brazil in April 1500. This occurrence was but one of the many episodes of Portuguese overseas expansion, which began early in the 15th century.

Why did a tiny country such as Portugal begin its expansion at the beginning of the 15th century, almost 100 years before Columbus, sailing for Spain, reached the Americas? There is more than one answer to this question, and, to answer it, a number of factors should be taken into account. In the first place, Portugal had distinguished itself among the European nations as an independent country with a tendency to look beyond its borders. Even though they were still no rivals for Venetians and Genoese, whom they would eventually surpass during the 13th and 14th centuries, the Portuguese had accumulated considerable experience in long-distance trade. Besides, before the Portuguese took control of their own international trade, Genoa had invested in their expansion and had made Lisbon a major center of its commercial endeavors.

Also, Portugal's economic involvement with the Islamic world in the Mediterranean facilitated this commercial experiment, and its rising trade can be measured by the growing use of money as a means of payment. Doubtlessly, the affinity of the Portuguese for the sea was abetted by their country's proximity to islands in the Atlantic and to the coast of Africa. Owing to the technology of

the time, mariners relied on specific ocean currents, which favored Portuguese ports as well as those situated in southwest Spain.

But there are other factors of Portuguese political history which are at least as important as those already mentioned. Portugal did not escape the crisis affecting all of western Europe. However, the nation faced it under political circumstances that were better than those of other kingdoms. During the entire 15th century, Portugal was a united kingdom and less subject to internal upheaval and dispute. This was not the case in France, England, Spain, and Italy – all of which were involved in wars and in dynastic complications.

The Portuguese monarchy had been consolidated in the revolution of 1383–1385, a very significant episode in the country's history. Beginning with a dispute over who should succeed as king of Portugal, the bourgeoisie in Lisbon revolted. A popular uprising followed, called "the revolt of the common folk" by the chronicler Fernão Lopes. This revolution was similar to other events which shook western Europe at the same time, but its denouement was different from those of the peasant revolts which in other countries were crushed by powerful lords. When the king of Castile, who was supported by the Portuguese nobility of highest rank, entered the country to take control of the throne, the problem of dynastic succession became, in addition, one of national independence. When the two sides met, both Portuguese independence and Dom João's claim to the throne had been secured. Dom João, the central figure in the revolution, was an illegitimate son of King Pedro I. He is known as the Master of the Order of Aviz.

Even though some historians consider the revolution of 1383 to be a middle-class uprising, it ended up reinforcing and concentrating power in the king owing to the policies undertaken by the Master of Aviz. Different influential sectors of Portuguese society – the nobility, the merchants, and the nascent bureaucracy – gathered around the crown. This is a fundamental point in any discussion of the reasons for Portuguese expansion. At that time the state, or better yet the crown, was the only entity capable of great undertakings – provided it had the power and stability necessary for such endeavors.

Finally, one should not forget that at the beginning of the 15th century, overseas expansion served the varied interests of the

diverse classes, social groups, and institutions that constituted Portuguese society. For the merchants, expansion offered the prospect of wealth. For the king it was an opportunity to create new sources of income at a time when crown revenues had greatly diminished. It was also a good way to keep the nobles busy, and it was a source of prestige. For the nobles and for the church, to serve the king or to serve God by bringing Christianity to the heathen entailed rewards and jobs that were more and more difficult to obtain within Portugal's narrow framework. For the common people, going to sea meant emigrating and searching for a better life. It was a flight from an oppressive state of affairs. The only ones left out of these converging interests were the large landowners, for whom the departure of men meant a rise in the cost of labor.

This is why overseas expansion became a sort of great national venture which everyone or almost everyone joined and which went on for centuries.

The search for adventure was not just a search for wealth. Five centuries ago there were continents that were scarcely known or totally undiscovered. There were oceans that had yet to be crossed. The so-called unknown regions captivated Europeans' imaginations. In those regions they foresaw, in different cases, fantastic kingdoms, monstrous creatures, and the locus of earthly paradise.

For example, when he discovered America, Columbus thought that further inland he would find men with only one eye and others who looked like dogs. He saw three mermaids leap from the sea, but was disappointed with their faces – they were not as beautiful as he had imagined. In one of his letters he referred to people further west who were born with tails. In 1487, when Afonso de Paiva and Pero da Covilhã left Portugal in search of an overland route to India, they carried orders from Dom João II to locate the kingdom of Prester John. According to legend, Prester John was a descendant of the Wise Men and an entrenched enemy of the Muslims. From at least the middle of the 12th century, Prester John was part of Europeans' fantasy world. The legend derived from reality, from the existence of Ethiopia, in east Africa, where blacks had adopted a form of Christianity.

The dreams associated with the oceanic adventure should not be seen as scornful fantasies used to hide material interest. But beyond

doubt material considerations prevailed, especially when the world's contours became better known and practical matters of colonization entered center stage.

Two final points should be noted when one analyzes Portuguese expansion in general. On the one hand, this expansion constituted an important renovation of the so-called seafaring techniques. When Lusitanian ships set out for Guinea, navigation charts still did not include latitudes and longitudes, only routes and distances. Improved quadrants and astrolabes allowed navigators to use the stars to pinpoint their ships' positions. This was an important innovation. With the caravelle, which was used beginning in 1441, the Portuguese had also developed a more appropriate type of ship design. The caravelle was, for its time, a light and rapid vessel. Its draft was shallow, which allowed it to come quite close to dry land and still avoid running aground. The caravelle was the apple of Portuguese eyes, and they made full use of these ships in their voyages to Brazil during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The other point has to do with a gradual change in outlook notable among Portuguese humanists such as Duarte Pacheco Pereira, Diogo Gomes, and Dom João de Castro. Overseas exploration showed over and over how mistaken the old notions were. For example, the description of the world in Ptolemy's *Geography* was refuted by firsthand experience. Given cases such as this, ancient authorities began to be doubted.

Gold and spices were the goods most sought by the Portuguese. Their interest in gold is easy to understand. It was used as a reliable means of exchange, Asian aristocrats decorated their temples and palaces with it, and they used it in their clothes. But why spices, or rather condiments?

The high price of seasonings can be explained by the era's limited techniques for the preservation of food and also by people's eating habits. Medieval western Europe was a "carnivorous civilization." Huge quantities of cattle were slaughtered at the beginning of summer, when they could no longer forage in the countryside. Meat was stored and precariously preserved by salting it, smoking it, or drying it in the sun. Fish was also preserved in these ways. However, these processes often made the food unpalatable.

Seasonings were required, and adding pepper helped to disguise rot. Condiments were also used in stylish food of the time, just like coffee, which much later ended up being consumed in grand scale all over the world. Gold and spices were always in high demand during the 15th and 16th centuries, but there were other sought-after goods as well: fish and meat, wood, dyes, medicinal herbs, and, little by little, instruments endowed with speech – African slaves.

The 1415 conquest of Ceuta, in northern Africa, is usually considered the starting point for Portuguese overseas expansion, which progressed methodically down the west coast of Africa and out to the islands in the Atlantic Ocean. Exploration of the African coast did not happen overnight. It took 53 years, beginning with Gil Eanes's passing Cape Bojador in 1434 to Bartolomeu Dias's rounding of the fearsome Cape of Good Hope in 1487. Once he was in the Indian Ocean, it was possible for Vasco da Gama to reach India, the elusive land of spices and dreams. After this, the Portuguese went all the way to China and Japan, where their influence was considerable. Japanese historians have called the period between 1540 and 1630 the "Christian century."

Without going far into the African continent, the Portuguese set up a series of fortified trading posts or *feitorias* along the coast. The Portuguese crown regulated African trade. It established a royal monopoly on gold transactions and required money to be coined in the Casa da Moeda or Mint. Around 1481 it also created the Casa da Mina or Casa da Guiné, which was a special customs house for African trade. From the west coast of Africa the Portuguese brought back scant quantities of gold dust, ivory (which up to then had come from Egypt and had been controlled by Arab merchants), and a pepper known as *pimenta malagueta*. After 1441 their specialty became slaves. In the beginning slaves were sent to Portugal, where they were employed as domestic servants and urban workers.

The history of Portuguese occupation of the Atlantic islands is quite different. There they carried out significant experiments in large-scale agriculture using slave labor. After disputing and losing the Canary Islands to the Spaniards, the Portuguese managed to hold on to other islands: Madeira (ca. 1420), the Azores (ca. 1427), Cape Verde (1460), and São Tomé (1471). On the Isle of

Madeira two parallel farming systems vied with one another. Traditional wheat farming attracted a considerable number of small, rural landowners. Sugar plantations arose simultaneously. They were financed by Genoese and Jewish merchants and commercial agents and relied on slave labor.

The sugar economy ended up winning out, but its success was short-lived. Its rapid decline came from internal factors as well as from competition with sugar from Brazil and São Tomé. In fact, on the Isle of São Tomé the Portuguese set up a system of large-scale sugar plantations very similar to the system they would use in Brazil. São Tomé could count on an abundant supply of slaves because it was close to the African coast and to the trading posts at São Jorge da Mina and Axim. It had plantations or *engenhos* which had as many as 150 to 300 slaves, according to an account written in 1554. São Tomé was always a way station for slaves brought from the continent. From there they were sent to America or to Europe. In the 17th century the sugar industry fell on hard times, and slave distribution became the main activity on São Tomé.

The first ship to return from Vasco da Gama's expedition reached Portugal in July 1499. It produced great enthusiasm. Months later, on 9 March 1500, a fleet of 13 ships set sail from Lisbon. This was the most grandiose of all expeditions so far. It was apparently destined for the East Indies and was under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral, a nobleman scarcely more than 30 years old. The fleet, after passing the Cape Verde Islands, headed west, away from the African coast. On 21 April it sighted what would become Brazilian land. On that day a landing party went ashore briefly. On the following day the fleet anchored at Porto Seguro, on the coast of the present-day state of Bahia.

Beginning in the 19th century, scholars have debated whether the Portuguese arrival in Brazil was a chance happening brought about by ocean currents or whether there was prior knowledge of the New World, and Cabral had set off on a sort of secret mission toward the west. Everything suggests that Cabral's expedition was directed to India. This does not rule out the probability that European navigators, especially Portuguese navigators, might have visited the coast of Brazil before 1500.

1.2 THE INDIANS

When the Europeans reached the land that would someday be Brazil, they found an Amerindian population living along the coast and in the basin of the Paraná and Paraguay Rivers. This population was linguistically and culturally quite homogeneous.

Notwithstanding their homogeneity, they can be divided into two large groups: the Tupi-Guarani and the Tapuia. The Tupi-Guarani lived along almost the entire Brazilian coast – from at least Ceará in the North to Lake Patos in the far South. The Tupi, who were also known as the Tupinambá, dominated the coastal strip from the North down to Cananéia, in the southern part of the present-day state of São Paulo. The Guarani were located in the basin of the Paraná and Paraguay and along the coast, from Cananéia down to the southern reaches of present-day Brazil. In spite of their different geographic locations, the two subgroups are known as Tupi-Guarani because of their similarity in language and culture.

At points along the littoral, the Tupi-Guarani population was interspersed with other groups: the Goitacá at the mouth of the Paraíba River, the Aimoré in southern Bahia and the northern part of present-day Espírito Santo State, the Tremembé along the strip between Ceará and Maranhão further north. These groups were called Tapuia, a generic word used by the Tupi-Guarani to indicate Indians who spoke a language different from theirs.

It is hard to analyze this indigenous society and its customs because their culture was so different from ours, and there was and still is considerable prejudice against Brazilian Indians. This prejudice can be seen in greater or lesser proportions in the writing of chroniclers, travelers, and priests – especially in Jesuit writings.

These accounts differentiate between Indians with positive and negative characteristics according to their greater or lesser degrees of resistance to the Portuguese. The Aimoré, outstanding for their military prowess and their rebelliousness, were always portrayed in a negative light. According to various descriptions, Indians usually lived like "human beings," in houses. The Aimoré lived like animals in the forest. The Tupinambá ate their enemies out of vengeance; the Aimoré ate them because they liked the taste of human flesh.

When the crown passed its first law prohibiting Indian slavery (1570), only the Aimoré were specifically excluded from this prohibition.

There is also a shortage of data, deriving neither from faulty understanding nor from prejudice, but from their difficulty in being obtained. No one knows how many Indians lived in the territory which comprises present-day Brazil and Paraguay 500 years ago, when the Portuguese came to the New World. Estimates range from a low of two million for the entire territory to five million for the Amazon region alone.

The Tupi groups hunted, fished, gathered fruit, and raised crops. When the soil gave out, they migrated to different areas, temporarily or permanently. To plant crops they cut down trees and burned the vegetation. The colonists employed the same techniques. They planted beans, corn, squash, and especially manioc. Manioc flour became a staple food in the colony. The Indian economy was at a subsistence level, and people consumed what they produced. Each village was self-sufficient, and there was little trading of foodstuffs between villages.

There were, however, contacts among villages for the exchange of women and luxury items such as toucan feathers and stones for making labrets. From these trading contacts, alliances formed and groups of villages attacked other groups. War and the capture of enemies who were later killed during celebrations of cannibalistic rites were essential elements in Tupi society. Prestige and fresh supplies of women were the products of these activities, which were reserved for men.

The arrival of the Portuguese was a veritable catastrophe for the Indians. Coming from afar, in tremendous ships, the Portuguese, and especially the priests, were associated in the Tupi mind with great shamans who traveled the land going from village to village. These shamans cured people; they prophesied and spoke of a land of plenty. Whites, as men endowed with special powers, were at the same time respected, feared, and hated.

On the other hand, since there was no Indian nation, only scattered groups of Indians who were often in conflict with one another, it was possible for the Portuguese to find native allies in their struggles against groups who resisted. Without Tupi allies, the town

of São Paulo de Piratininga (today the capital of São Paulo state) would have been conquered by the Tamoio Indians during its first years of existence. This is not to say that Indians did not ferociously resist the colonists, especially when the latter made attempts to enslave them. One exceptional form of resistance amounted to self-isolation, which they achieved by constant migration toward poorer regions. Within extremely narrow bounds, this strategy preserved their biological, social, and cultural heritage.

The Indians who gave in, or who were conquered, experienced cultural violence, epidemics, and death. From their contact with Europeans sprang a mixed population whose silent presence in the formation of Brazilian society can be seen even now.

But all in all, the word "catastrophe" is the most appropriate for describing the fate of the Amerindian population. Millions of Indians lived in Brazil at the time of conquest, and only some 270,000 are with us today.

1.3 COLONIZATION

The so-called discovery of Brazil occasioned none of the enthusiasm that Vasco da Gama's arrival in India had. Brazil appears as a land whose profit potential and geographic features were unknown. For several years people believed it was nothing more than a huge island. It was known mainly for its exotic lures: Indians, parrots, and macaws. Some informants, especially the Italians, began to call it the Land of the Parrots. King Dom Manuel first named it Vera Cruz and later called it Santa Cruz. The name "Brazil" began to appear in 1503. This word is associated with brazilwood, from a tropical tree that was the main resource of the land during the early days. Its duramen was very red and was used to make dye. Its sturdy wood was used to make furniture and in ship-building. Curiously, the "Brazil Islands" or something similar were mentioned in medieval Europe's tales of fantasy. Three islands with this name appear in a 1367 map. They are strewn among the Azores, at the latitude of Brittany (France), and along the coast of Ireland.

The first attempts at trading on the Brazilian coast relied on the same feitoria system that was used on the African coast. Brazil was leased for three years to a commercial consortium in Lisbon.

The group was headed by the New Christian Fernão de Noronha (or Loronha), who had obtained a monopoly. In exchange for his monopoly, he was obliged, so it seems, to send out six ships per year to explore 300 leagues (around 2,000 kilometers) of coastline and to set up a trading post. This consortium sent out a few expeditions, but when its lease expired in 1505, the Portuguese crown apparently assumed the responsibility of exploring the new land.

During these early years, from 1500 to 1535, the chief economic activity was the extraction of brazilwood, which was obtained mainly by trading with the Indians. Brazilwood trees did not grow in clusters or groves, but were scattered everywhere. As the supply gave out along the littoral, Europeans started relying on the Indians to furnish it. Collective work, especially in felling trees, was a common task in Tupinambá society, which meant that harvesting brazilwood would be relatively easy to integrate into traditional patterns of indigenous life. Indians supplied wood and to a lesser degree manioc flour. They traded them for pieces of cloth, knives, pen knives, and baubles – cheap items as far as the Portuguese were concerned.

In the beginning, Brazil was often mentioned along with India, either as a stop-off on the way there or as the location of a new route to India, which the Spaniards (mainly) sought. When he discovered America in 1492, Columbus, reaching the Antilles, thought he had reached the China Sea. Portugal contested the ownership of the new land, which gave rise to a series of negotiations and in 1494 produced the Treaty of Tordesillas. The world was divided into two hemispheres separated by an imaginary line 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. The land discovered west of the line would belong to Spain; that east of it would belong to Portugal.

This division lent itself to controversy, since it was never possible to establish exactly where the Line of Tordesillas was. (Only at the end of the 17th century did the Dutch devise a technique for measuring longitude accurately.) In whose territory lay the mouth of the Amazon or the mouth of the River Plate? Were these northern and southern points Portuguese or Spanish? Both rivers were seen as potential westward routes to India. Several expeditions from

both countries succeeded one another southward down the coast of Brazil. Finally a Portuguese, Ferdinand Magellan, sailing under the Spanish flag, traversed the strait which today bears his name. He sailed across the Pacific Ocean and reached the Philippines in 1521. This spectacular feat of navigation was, at the same time, a letdown for the Spaniards. The westward route to India had been found, but it was too long and difficult to be economically viable. Spanish eyes fixed on the riches in gold and silver that were being found in the American lands under their domain.

The greatest threat to Portugal's hold on Brazil came not from Spain but from France. France did not recognize the Treaty of Tordesillas, but it supported the principle of *uti possidetis*, which maintained that whoever effectively occupied an area owned it. Since Brazil's coast was too long to be defended by Portuguese patrols, the French began to trade for brazilwood, and they practiced piracy. Later on, at different times (1555–1560, 1612–1615), they would found settlements in Guanabara Bay (Rio de Janeiro) and in the North, in the present-day state of Maranhão.

Political considerations convinced the Portuguese crown that it was necessary to colonize this new land. Martim Afonso de Sousa's expedition (1530–1533) marks the moment of transition between the first and second phase of this endeavor. The expedition was to patrol the coast and to explore the land while keeping in mind the need to occupy it effectively. A colony was established (São Vicente, 1532), but the colonists accompanying Martim Afonso would not be able to pass their lands on to their descendants.

There are indications that Martim Afonso was still in Brazil when Dom João III decided to create hereditary captaincies. Brazil was divided into 15 sections by a set of lines running parallel to the equator and toward the Line of Tordesillas. Each section would be awarded to a so-called donatary captain. These donataries were a diverse group of people: bureaucrats, merchants, and members of the petty nobility. What they had in common was some connection to the crown.

Martim Afonso, an expert navigator, was one of the donataries. Another was Duarte Coelho, a soldier of modest means who had distinguished himself in the Orient and whose stay in Brazil would

be recognized owing to his success in Pernambuco. Jorge Figueiredo Correia, a scribe of the Royal Treasury and a great businessman, became a donatary. He was an associate of Mem de Sá and Lucas Giraldes, himself a member of the Giraldi family of Florentine merchants and bankers. One more donatary was Pero do Campo Tourinho, who sold his land in Portugal and set off for Brazil with 600 colonists. After conflicts with his colonists and after being reported to the Inquisition, Tourinho was sent back to Portugal. Before 1532. Fernão de Noronha had received the first Brazilian captaincy, São João Island, known today as Fernão de Noronha. There was no one from the high nobility on the list of original donataries because at that time dealings in India, in Portugal, and on the Atlantic islands were more attractive.

Donataries received an endowment from the crown which entitled them to take possession but not ownership of the land. They could not sell or partition their captaincies. Only the king had the right to change or nullify a captaincy. Possession of the land gave donataries extensive rights in the economic sphere, in the collecting of fees, and in the administration of their captaincies. To set up sugar mills or water mills or to exploit salt deposits required the paying of fees. A percentage of the fees or tribute owed the crown for the right to brazilwood, precious metals, and fishing derivatives was owed to the donatary captains as well. In the administrative sector donataries had a monopoly on the system of justice; they could found towns, mete out plots of land, enlist colonists for military purposes, and form militias under their command.

The right to award individuals plots of land is important because it gave rise to the formation of vast *latifúndios*, or estates. In Brazil, these land grants, called *sesmarias*, were understood to be tracts of virgin land for a single individual who was obliged to cultivate the land within five years and to pay a fee to the crown. Grantees or *sesmeiros* rarely fulfilled this obligation. On founding these hereditary captaincies, the crown did not limit its privileges to managing them. The king retained his monopoly over raw materials and spices, as well as his entitlement to a part of the tribute paid for use of the land. He also retained the right to administer the law in cases of death penalties or corporal punishment for people of

noble lineage. On top of this, he appointed a battery of officials to guarantee collection of the crown's income.

When it instituted the captaincies, the crown adopted a system whose origin can be found in the medieval society of Europe. One instance of this is the donataries' right to obtain payment for permission to set up sugar mills. This is analogous to the "banalities" farmers paid feudal lords. However, in their essence, even in their original form, captaincies were a transitory and still tentative attempt at colonization and at integrating the colony into the European mercantile economy.

With the exception of those of São Vicente and Pernambuco, the captaincies, to a greater or lesser extent, failed owing to a lack of resources and experience, to internal rifts, and to Indian attacks. It was not by chance that the most successful captaincies combined their sugar economy with a less aggressive relationship with Indian tribes. Over the years the crown bought the captaincies back. They survived as administrative units, but their character was changed because they belonged to the state. Between 1752 and 1754, the Marquis of Pombal for all intents and purposes finished the process of removing captaincies from the private domain and placing them in the public one.

Dom João III's decision to set up an overall government (*governo geral*) for Brazil came at a time when the Portuguese crown was struggling with significant events in the international sphere. Business in India had faced its first serious crises. Even though the dream of an African empire had not died, Portugal had suffered several military defeats in Morocco. In the same year (1549), Tomé de Sousa was sent to Brazil as its first royal governor, and the Portuguese commercial emporium in Flanders was shut down because it had failed to make a profit. Finally, in contrast to how things were going in Brazil, in their American colonies the Spaniards had experienced growing success in their search for precious metals. And in 1545 they had discovered the great silver mine in Potosí. While all these factors may have influenced the crown's decision, it must be remembered that the captaincies' failure made the problems of Portuguese America's precarious administration clearer to the Portuguese themselves.

Tomé de Sousa, a nobleman with experience in Africa and India, arrived in Bahia in the company of more than 1,000 people. Of them 400 were deportees. The governor-general brought with him a long list of written instructions which show the crown's intent to guarantee occupation of the new land, to colonize it, and to administer the crown's income. To these ends some new administrative positions were created. The most important of them were the *ouvidor*, who would administer justice; the *capitão-mor*, whose job it was to patrol the coast; and the *provedor-mor*, who would oversee and increase the collection of fees.

However, throughout the 16th century, Brazil did not provide much in the way of riches for the royal coffers. Indeed, according to Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, in 1558 the revenue from tribute coming from Brazil amounted to something like 2.5 percent of the crown's income. Trade with India supplied 26 percent.

With the governor-general came the first Jesuits – Manuel da Nóbrega and five companions. Their mission was to catechize the Indians and to discipline the scanty but ill-reputed clergy already in Brazil. Later on, in 1552, the first episcopate (under the archbishopric of Lisbon) was founded in Salvador. This was a step toward establishing a close relationship between church and state. The beginning of the colonial overseas administration (i.e., *governos gerais*) entailed the establishment of an executive pole in the colony's organization. Tomé de Sousa followed his instructions and immediately began the long task of constructing Salvador, the capital of Brazil up to 1763.

The institution of an overseas administration attempted to insure governmental centralization, but the governor-general was not all-powerful, nor, in the early years, could he undertake wide-ranging initiatives. Links among the captaincies were quite precarious, which limited the governors' radii of action. Correspondence among the Jesuits gives clear indication of their isolation. Father Francisco Pires, writing from Salvador in 1552 to his brothers in Coimbra, complains of only being able to operate locally because "at times a year goes by, and we know nothing of one another owing to the weather and the few ships that go up and down the coast. We often see more ships from Portugal than from the other captaincies." A year later, off in the backlands of São Vicente, Nóbrega

says practically the same thing: "in this captaincy, one is more likely to have news from Lisbon than one is likely to hear from Bahia."

After the first three decades, which were marked by efforts to secure Portuguese possession of the land, colonization patterns began to emerge. As was the case in all of Latin America, Brazil became a colony whose essential role was one of supplying highly important foodstuffs or minerals for European commerce. Portugal adopted a policy consisting of incentives for commercial endeavors with massive holdings. It exported a few products on a large-scale basis. This directive must have been aimed at making wealthy merchants, the crown, and the crown's dependents even wealthier. Since Portugal did not dominate European commercial circuits, which were controlled by Spain, Holland, and England, the policy must have helped Europe's economy in general.

The preference for large landholdings was linked to the notion that large-scale production was beneficial. In addition, small-scale, autonomous landowners would tend to produce enough for their own subsistence and to market only small surpluses, all of which would be contrary to a mercantilistic undertaking.

In addition to commercial objectives and the system of large landholding, came a third element: compulsory labor. Notwithstanding local variations, this was another feature common to all of Latin America. Different forms of servitude prevailed in Spanish America, while slavery was dominant in Brazil.

Where was the appeal in such an odious and apparently moribund form of labor, especially at a historical juncture pompously called the Dawn of the Modern Era? One can formulate an answer by saying that there was an insufficient supply of men who could emigrate as indentured or salaried workers, and wage labor was not convenient for the goals of colonization. There was a tremendous amount of available land because the immense sesmarias or land grants were not always effectively occupied by the donataries. For this reason, it was no simple matter for ranchers to keep free workers on their properties. They could try to make their living in another manner, which would create fluctuations in labor supply for the mercantile endeavor.

However, if the introduction of slave labor can be explained in this way, why then did the Portuguese opt for black slaves rather than for Indian slaves? Lest one forget, there was a period of transition from Indian to black slaves. Its dates and places varied, however. It was shorter in the more dynamic and profitable central portion of the colony. That is, the sugar economy had the means to purchase black slaves, who were more expensive than Indian slaves. The transition period was longer in the periphery. Only at the beginning of the 18th century, with the discovery of gold, would São Paulo begin to use black slaves regularly and in large numbers.

Several factors explain the choice of African slaves. Indian slavery collided with a series of nuisances as far as the goals of colonization were concerned. The Indians' culture was incompatible with intensive, regular toil and was much less compatible with the compulsory labor Europeans had in mind. Indians were not loafers or even lazy. They simply did what was needed to get by, which was not much, given that fish, fruit, and animals abounded at that time. Much of their energy and imagination were spent on rituals, celebrations, and wars. Notions of constant work, or what today is known as productivity, were totally alien.

The Portuguese attempted to subject Indians in two basic ways. One method of subjection was carried out in a ruthless economic venture by the colonists, who, purely and simply, enslaved Indians. The other was tried by religious orders, principally by the Jesuits. Their motives were based on their concept of missionary work. They tried to turn Indians into "good Christians" by gathering them into small towns or villages. To be a "good Christian" also meant acquiring European work habits, which would create an indigenous and pliable labor force to serve the needs of the colony.

The two methods were not the same. Religious orders had the merit of trying to protect Indians from being enslaved by colonists, which gave rise to considerable friction between colonists and priests. But the fathers had no respect for the indigenous culture either. Indeed, they went so far as to doubt the Indians' status as people. Father Manuel da Nóbrega maintained that "Indians are dogs who kill and eat one another. And in their vices and dealings with one another, they are pigs."

Indians resisted the different forms of subjection by waging war, by fleeing, and by refusing to perform forced labor. Comparatively speaking, Indians were in better positions to resist than African slaves were. Africans faced unknown territory into which they had been forcibly transplanted, whereas the Indians were on native ground.

Another factor which put Indian slavery at a disadvantage was the demographic catastrophe. Indians fell victim to diseases such as measles, smallpox, and the common cold – against which they had no biological defenses. In 1562 and 1563, two epidemic waves were exceptionally virulent. They appear to have been responsible for 60,000 deaths among Indians, without counting any victims in the backlands. The death of indigenous people, who in part were employed in raising foodstuffs, caused a terrible famine in Brazil's Northeast, as well as a shortage of workers.

It was not by chance, then, that beginning in the 1570s, the importation of Africans was encouraged, and the crown began to take measures and pass laws which tried to stop the wholesale slaughter and enslavement of Indians. These laws had exceptions and were easily flouted. Indians were enslaved after "just wars" – that is, wars considered to have been fought in self-defense. Slavery was a punishment for cannibalism. And Indians captured by other tribes were ransomed and enslaved rather than being eaten in cannibal rituals. Only in 1758 would the crown proclaim definitive freedom for indigenous peoples. But, essentially, Indian slavery had been abandoned long before, owing to the difficulties suggested above and the existence of an alternative solution.

As they explored the African coast during the 15th century, the Portuguese had begun their slave trade, which was helped along by their contact with societies which, to a large extent, were familiar with the market value of slaves. By the last decades of the 16th century, African slave trade was not only reasonably developed, but it had also demonstrated how profitable it could be. Colonists knew about blacks' abilities, especially about how lucrative their labor had been in the sugar industry of the Atlantic islands. Many slaves came from cultures which regularly worked with iron implements and in which cattle were raised. Because of this, their productive capacity was significantly higher than the Indians'. It has been

estimated that during the first half of the 17th century, during the peak years of the sugar economy, the purchase price of a black slave was recovered after 13 to 16 months of work. Even after a huge rise in slave purchase prices after 1700, slaves paid for themselves in 30 months.

The flow of Africans brought from the so-called black continent varied in its intensity. And the estimates of the number of people brought over as slaves vary considerably. It is said that between 1550 and 1855 four million slaves came in through Brazilian ports. Most of them were young males.

Where they came from depended on how the slave trade was organized, on the local conditions in Africa, and, to a greater extent, on the preferences of Brazilian slave owners. During the 16th century Guinea (Bissau and Cacheu) and the Mina Coast, indeed four ports along the Dahomey littoral, provided the bulk of African slaves. Beginning in the 17th century, regions farther south on the African coast such as Angola and the Congo became the most important exportation centers. They used the ports of Luanda, Benguela, and Cabinda. Angolans were brought in greater numbers during the 18th century and seem to have made up 70 percent of all slaves transported to Brazil during that century.

Historians customarily divide African peoples into two large ethnic groups: the "Sudanese," who came from western Africa, the Egyptian Sudan, and the north coast of the Gulf of Guinea; and the "Bantus" from equatorial and tropical Africa, that is, from part of the Gulf of Guinea, from the Congo, Angola, and Mozambique. Within these two large groups, black slaves of many different ethnicities came to Brazil. The "Sudanese" included Yorubas, Iwes, Tapas, and Haussas; the "Bantus" Angolas, Bengalas, Monjolos, and Mozambicans.

The two great import centers for slaves were Salvador and later Rio de Janeiro. Each had its own way of doing business, and each rivaled the other. The slave traders in Salvador used tobacco as a valuable means of exchange on the African coast. This tobacco was grown in the Bahian Recôncavo, a humid, fertile region surrounding Salvador. They were always more closely associated with the Mina Coast, Guinea, and the Bight of Benin – in the latter case even more so after mid-1770, when the Mina slave trade began to

decline. Rio de Janeiro received slaves mainly from Angola. It surpassed Salvador once gold mines were discovered, as the sugar industry worked its way southward, and when the city of Rio began its considerable growth in the first part of the 19th century.

It would be wrong to think that while Indians opposed slavery, blacks accepted it passively. From the very beginning, individual or mass flight, attacks on masters, and daily resistance were part of the relationship between masters and slaves. Hundreds of maroon communities, known locally as *quilombos*, were formed by runaway slaves during colonial times. In these Brazilian communities, Africans created social organizations similar to what they knew in Africa. One of these communities, and certainly the most important of them, was known as Palmares. It was a network of settlements situated in a region which today corresponds to the state of Alagoas, in the Brazilian Northeast. It was formed in the beginning of the 17th century and withstood attacks from the Portuguese and the Dutch for almost an entire century, only to fall in 1695.

Little is known of the Palmares quilombo. It is mentioned in some Portuguese sources, which toward the end of the community's existence announce the imprisonment and hanging of the rebels' leader – a black by the name of Zumbi. Recent archeological research in the vicinity of the quilombo suggests that Palmares was a socially diverse community which took in ex-slaves as well as whites who were wanted by the crown because of religious or other infractions.

Notwithstanding the different forms of resistance, which continued until the last decades of the 19th century, African slaves as well as Afro-Brazilians were not able to overthrow forced labor. For better or worse, they adapted to it. Among the different factors that limited their potential for collective rebellion, it must be remembered that contrary to the Indians, blacks had been uprooted, arbitrarily separated, and brought in successive waves to an alien land.

On the other hand, neither the church nor the state opposed the enslavement of blacks. Religious organizations such as the Benedictines even became large-scale slave owners. They maintained that the institution of slavery already existed in Africa and that they had merely transported slaves to the Christian world where they

would become civilized and saved, once they knew true religion. On top of this, blacks were considered racially inferior. In the course of the 19th century, "scientific" theories reinforced this prejudice. The size and shape of blacks' skulls, the weight of their brains, and other factors "demonstrated" that blacks were a race of people with low intelligence, that they were emotionally unstable and biologically destined to subjection.

One should also remember how laws affected blacks. The contrast with Indians in this matter is blatant. The latter group could rely on laws protecting them from slavery – of course few of these laws were enforced, and they all had many exceptions. Black slaves had no rights whatsoever: as far as the law was concerned, they were considered things rather than people.

To look at demography for a moment, even though estimates vary, data show that, compared to slave mortality in the United States, there was a higher mortality rate among black slaves in Brazil. Children and new arrivals were especially vulnerable. At the beginning of the 19th century, observers estimated that the slave population in Brazil declined at a rate of 5 to 8 percent per year. Recent data reveal that the life expectancy of a male slave born in 1872 was somewhere around 20 years. That of the population at large was 27.4 years. A male slave born in the United States around 1850 had a life expectancy of 35.5 years.

In spite of these shocking numbers, it cannot be said that black slaves suffered a demographic catastrophe as great as the one that decimated the Indians. Blacks who came from the Congo, from northern Angola, and from Dahomey (present-day Benin) were less susceptible to contagious diseases such as smallpox. At any rate, even with the premature physical destruction of blacks, slave owners always had the possibility of renewing their supply by bringing more in. Brazilian slavery became totally dependent on this source. With rare exceptions, there were no attempts at stimulating the growth of the slave population already in Brazil. Slave women had low fertility. On top of this, to raise a child for 12 or 14 years was considered a risky endeavor if one kept in mind the high mortality rates owing to slaves' living conditions.

For several centuries the Portuguese crown tried to insure the greatest profit from the colonial endeavor through strategies closely

related to the then prevailing notions of mercantilist economic policy. This policy maintained that colonies should contribute to the mother country's self-sufficiency. Colonies were supposed to be reserves belonging to colonizing powers, which, internationally, were in competition with one another. To this end each metropolis established a system of norms and practices designed to keep competitors from exploiting the colonies within its particular colonial system. The basic goal was "exclusivity" – colonies should trade with their imperial capital and with no one else.

As far as possible, they attempted to prohibit foreign ships from transporting merchandise from a colony, especially if those ships were to sell the merchandise in other European countries. They likewise sought to prohibit merchandise, especially merchandise not produced in Portugal, from being brought to a colony by foreign vessels. Put very simply, mother countries tried to depress prices they paid their colonies for local products as much as possible; they tried to sell those products at the highest possible prices in the metropolis. They also tried to profit as much as they could from the sale of goods to their colonies, without having to compete with other suppliers. Colonial exclusivity took different forms: leasing, direct exploitation by the state, and the creation of privileged trading companies which benefited specific groups in the mother countries.

In the Portuguese case, mercantile precepts were not always consistently applied. The Portuguese crown made exceptions to mercantilist principles mainly because it had no means of enforcing them. This is not a matter of smuggling, because to smuggle was, purely and simply, to break the rules of the game. It is, rather, a matter of Portugal's position within the entirety of European nations. While the Portuguese were in the vanguard of overseas exploration, they had no means of monopolizing their colonial trade. By the 16th century, the great commercial centers were not in Portugal but in Holland. And the Dutch were important commercial partners with Portugal. They transported salt, Portuguese wine, and Brazilian sugar. In turn, the Dutch supplied manufactured products: cheese, copper, and cloth.

Later on, throughout the 17th century, Portugal would be forced into an unequal relationship with England, at that time an emerging power in Europe. For these reasons, Portuguese colonial

exclusivity vacillated according to the circumstances. At times, trade was relatively open, at times it was regulated by a centralized and controlled system combined with special concessions. These concessions meant, deep down, that other countries profited from the Portuguese colonial system.

Without going over all the advances and retreats, what follows are some typical examples. The period between 1530 and 1571 was one of relative freedom of trade. But in 1571 the king, Dom Sebastião, decreed that Portuguese ships had exclusive right of trade with the colony. This measure coincided with the beginning years of the great expansion in the sugar economy. The years between 1580 and 1640, known as the Crown Union, was a time in which the king of Spain also occupied the Portuguese throne. It was characterized by growing restrictions on other countries' participation in colonial trade. More than any other country, Holland was ruled out because it was at war with Spain. Even so, there is evidence of regular and direct traffic around 1590 between Brazil and Hamburg, Germany.

After the end of the Crown Union, when Dom João IV was proclaimed king of Portugal, a brief period of "free trade" followed, and there was little regulation and an absence of control on the colonial import market. However, in 1649, a new, centralized and controlled system of trade was established which used fleets. With capital obtained primarily from New Christians (Jews or descendants of Jews forced in 1497 to convert to Catholicism), the Companhia Geral de Comércio do Brasil (the General Brazilian Trading Company) was created. This company had the responsibility of maintaining a fleet of 36 armed ships which twice a year would escort merchant ships leaving and reaching Brazil. In exchange for its colonial monopoly on wine, flour, olive oil, and salt cod, the company had the right to set prices for these items. Beginning in 1694 the company was turned into an arm of the government.

Nonetheless, this enterprise did not stop Portugal from offering concessions to Holland and, especially, to England. Succinctly speaking, the crown sought political protection from England and offered England commercial advantages. One good example is the treaty imposed by Cromwell in 1654. It gave the English the right

to deal directly with the Brazilian colony. England could not, however, buy or sell products under the monopoly of the Companhia Geral. The system of fleets was abandoned in 1765, when the Marquis of Pombal decided to stimulate trade and restrict the growing power of the English in Brazil. He accomplished this by creating new companies (Companhia do Grão-Pará e Maranhão, Companhia de Pernambuco e Paraíba). These were the last manifestations of mercantilism in Brazil.

The two institutions naturally suited for organizing the colonization of Brazil were the state and the Catholic church. They were closely linked to one another, since Catholicism was recognized as the state religion. In principle, there was a division of labor between these two institutions. The state had the fundamental role of guaranteeing Portuguese sovereignty over the colony, of administering it, of developing a settlement policy, of solving basic problems such as the supply of labor, and of establishing the sort of relationship that should obtain between Lisbon and the colony. This task presupposed that settlers in Brazil recognized the authority of the state – because they were forced to, because they agreed to, or for both reasons.

This is where the church came in. Since it was in charge of people's behavior and "in control of their souls" in daily life, it was a very efficient means for conveying the idea of obedience and, strictly speaking, obedience to the power of the state. But that was not all the church would do. It was present throughout people's lives – in the decisive episodes of their birth, marriage, and death. Membership in a particular community, being able to live a decent life, and having a sinless departure from this "vale of tears" depended on ceremonies monopolized by the church: baptism, confirmation, matrimony, confession, extreme unction in the hour of one's death, and burial in a cemetery known by the weighty term *campo santo* or "holy field."

As everyone knows, in the history of Western civilization relations between church and state have varied from country to country. Over time, they have not even been constant within particular countries. In the Portuguese case, the church had been subordinated to the state by a mechanism known as *padroado real* or "royal patronage." This patronage entailed an ample concession from the Roman church to

the Portuguese crown. In exchange for this, the state guaranteed it would promote and safeguard the clergy and their rights in all the territory it discovered. The king kept his right to receive the tribute or tithe owed by the church's subjects – that is, a tenth of their earnings from whatever endeavor. The church had the right to create dioceses and to name its bishops.

At least in theory, many of the crown's duties made the church even more subordinate to the state. This was the case in the state's commitment to pay the clergy and to construct and preserve church buildings. To supervise these goings-on, the Portuguese government created a sort of religious department of state. It was known as the Mesa da Consciência e Ordens (Council of Conscience and Orders).

Crown control over the church was restrained in part by the fact that, up to the time of the Marquis of Pombal (1750–1777), Jesuits were very influential in the court. In Brazil, state control suffered from other restrictions. On the one hand, it was very difficult to monitor the activities of the secular clergy, who were dispersed throughout the territory. On the other hand, religious orders were able to acquire a greater degree of autonomy. The greater autonomy enjoyed by Franciscans, Fathers of Mercy, Benedictines, Carmelites, and, especially, Jesuits was the result of several different circumstances. Each institution obeyed its own laws and had a definite policy with respect to vital colonial matters such as the Indian question. On top of this, once they acquired vast tracts of land and began to farm, they no longer depended on the crown for their survival.

Secular priests endeavored to flee the weight of the state and of the church itself whenever they could. They preferred to act on their own. The presence of priests can be documented in practically all rebel movements beginning in 1789 and continuing beyond Brazilian independence up to the middle of the 19th century. It would, however, be a mistake to consider all the clergy rebellious in nature. Rebels were visible, but exceptions to the rule. In its day-by-day activity, the church, either silently or with pomp, tried to carry out its mission of converting Indians and blacks and to convince people to obey its rules, as well as those of the state.

At the time of colonization, Portugal was an absolutist state. In theory, all power was concentrated by divine right in the king. The kingdom (i.e., the territory, his subjects, and their possessions) belonged to the king as part of his patrimony. Notwithstanding his power, the king had to consider the interests of social classes and social groups: nobles, merchants, clergy, and common folk. Nor does "absolutist" mean that he alone ruled. The preference for the word "crown" rather than "king" as a designator of the Portuguese monarchy and its power reflects this last assertion. If the king's word was decisive, a bureaucracy, a branch of government the king himself had created, weighed heavily in his decisions. A series of primarily fiscal measures designed to restrict the king's power had set up some distinctions between what was private and what was public. The notion of "common good" arose as a new idea which justified restricting royal power to demand loans or to usurp private property.

The establishment of a colonial administration fractured and weakened the crown's power. Of course all important decisions were made in Lisbon. But the administrators in Brazil had their own prerogatives. They at times had to improvise solutions for unexpected situations. And they often maintained a delicate balance between the immediate pressures they felt from the colonists and their orders emanating from far-off Lisbon.

1.4 COLONIAL SOCIETY

Within the colony's social structure, "purity of blood" was a criterion used to segregate people, at least up to 1773. Those of impure blood were New Christians, free blacks, and, to an extent, Indians and different types of racially mixed people. This racial dividing line ruled out certain jobs, titles of nobility, and membership in prestigious brotherhoods for many people. The charter of 1773 abolished the distinction between Old and New Christians; but this does not mean that from that time on prejudice ceased to exist.

This discriminatory criterion applied essentially to persons. There was, however, a deeper cleavage which separated persons and non-persons – that is, free people from slaves. As far as the law was

concerned, slaves were things. Whether one was free or enslaved was closely linked to color and ethnicity. Slaves were mainly black, or Indians and mixed-bloods. There was a special nomenclature for racial mixtures: people were known as mulattos; *mamelucos*, or mixtures of Indian and white; *curibocas* or *caboclos*, "near whites or descendants of white men"; and *cafusos*, or mixtures of Indians and blacks.

One must distinguish, however, between Indian slavery and black slavery. From the beginning of Brazil's colonization up to the time indigenous slavery was formally extinguished, there were enslaved Indians and Indians known as freed or "administrated." These Indians had been captured, but had been placed under colonists' tutelage. Their situation was not much different from the slaves'. However, if in general the Indian's lot was a sad one, it was nothing compared to that of blacks. The protection offered by religious orders to their Indian settlements put limits on outright exploitation of Indians. And the crown itself tried to establish a less discriminatory policy.

For example, a 1755 decree went so far as to encourage marriages between Indians and whites and maintained that there was "nothing wrong" with such unions. The issues of these marriages were to be preferred for "jobs and honors," and it was against the law to call them caboclos or other similar names that might be taken as "injurious." Years later, the viceroy of Brazil dismissed a militia chief (who was an Indian) because he "displayed sentiments so low as to marry a black woman, staining his blood with this union and making himself unworthy of the office of militia chief."

The importance of Africans and Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian society can be confirmed by population statistics from the end of the colonial period. In the four largest provinces (Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro), blacks and mulattos made up nearly 75 percent, 68 percent, 79 percent, and 64 percent of the respective populations. Only São Paulo had a majority (56 percent) of whites in its population. Slaves worked in the fields, in the sugar mills, in the mines, and as servants in their masters' houses. In the cities they were given unpleasant jobs: as bearers of people and goods, as bearers of foul-smelling garbage and sewage, or as

construction workers. They were also employed as artisans, vegetable stand operators, street vendors, and messenger boys.

Slaveholding did not always add up to a direct relationship between master and slave; it involved other people. Some slaves were rented to perform services for third parties, and, in the cities, there were "slave earners" (*escravos de ganho*). In the latter case, masters permitted their slaves to be self-employed, either offering services or selling merchandise. The masters received a fixed percentage of slaves' daily or weekly earnings. Slave earners were common in Rio de Janeiro during the early decades of the 19th century. They were used in small- or large-scale operations – sometimes masters had only one slave earner, other times they had as many as 30 or 40. While the majority of these slave earners worked out of doors, and some of them, with their masters' approval, became prostitutes or beggars, others worked in barber shops or as laborers.

Even among the slaves there were social distinctions, some of which were made according to slaves' occupations. There was a difference between working in the master's house and in the fields, and likewise a difference between working on some huge estate and being a slave earner in the city. Other distinctions were made according to their origins, to the length of time they had been in Brazil, and to their skin color. Slaves recently arrived from Africa were called *boçais* (singular: *boçal*) because they did not know the language or the local customs. Those who had, relatively speaking, "adapted" and spoke and understood Portuguese were known as *ladinos*. Those born in Brazil were called *crioulos*. Colorwise, one extreme was the "pitch black," the other the light mulatto. In general, mulattos and crioulos were preferred for domestic service, as artisans, and as supervisors. The darker slaves, especially the Africans, were given the heaviest work.

Besides the distinctions within the enslaved masses, one should remember that in colonial Brazil there were many free or manumitted Africans or Afro-Brazilians. Data from the end of the colonial period indicate that nearly 42 percent of the black or mulatto population was free. Their freedom was ambiguous, however. While they were formally considered free, in practice they ended up being

arbitrarily enslaved, especially when their color or their features identified them as black. They could not be members of town councils or of prestigious lay brotherhoods like the Ordem Terceira de São Francisco. Ex-slaves' liberty could even be revoked if they acted disrespectfully toward their former masters.

Slavery was a national institution. It permeated the whole of society and conditioned Brazilians' way of acting and thinking. The desire to be a slave owner and the effort to obtain slaves ran from the ruling class all the way down to the humble urban artisan. There were plantation and mine owners with hundreds of slaves, small farmers with two or three, and urban households with only one slave. Prejudice against blacks transcended slavery and has survived in a different form up to today. At least until the time that masses of European workers came to central and southern Brazil, manual labor was socially scorned as "something just for blacks."

In theory, free people in the colony belonged to a hierarchical order. This division into nobility, clergy, and folk was typical of the *ancien régime* in Portugal. Its transfer to Brazil had few practical repercussions. The white elite avidly vied for titles of nobility, but there was no hereditary aristocracy. There were few true nobles (*fidalgos*), and common people with noble pretensions were in the majority.

All this does not mean that Brazil's colonial society was made up only of masters and slaves. Backwoodsmen, small farmers, and workers lived in the countryside. The few cities had their share of street vendors, small merchants, and artisans. And this picture was not static. The discovery of gold and diamonds in Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Mato Grosso early in the 18th century and the arrival of the royal family in Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 19th century contributed, each in its own way, to social diversification and changes in the relationship between the city and the country. As far as the mining regions and cities like Salvador and Rio de Janeiro are concerned, one can speak of an administrative bureaucracy, of men of letters, and of people engaged in the professions, especially in law.

Different undertakings were unequal in their prestige. The most prestigious, especially in the early days, was not so much the activity associated with planting as merely "being a plantation owner." In

the famous words appearing in Father Antonil's *Cultura e opuléncia do Brasil por suas drogas e minas*, which he wrote at the beginning of the 18th century:

> plantation owner is the title to which many aspire because it brings with it the idea of being served and respected by many people. And . . . being a plantation owner in Brazil is as esteemed as the titles of nobility are esteemed in Portugal.

Commerce was considered to be a less worthy profession, and, theoretically, businessmen were excluded from town councils and from receiving special honors. The fact that many merchants were New Christians added another element of discrimination. Artisans were also undervalued since working with one's hands was thought to be an inferior activity. Because they were almost always not represented in the town councils, these people sometimes made themselves heard through the *juízes de fora* – professional magistrates appointed by the crown. In addition to their regular duties, these judges presided over town councils in major cities.

At the top of the social pyramid were the wealthy rural landowners and merchants engaged in foreign commerce. This was typical of settlements on the northeast coastline and later on of Rio de Janeiro. Since they played a strategic role in the life of the colony, these wealthy merchants were not subject to the discrimination that was theoretically applied to their livelihood. Quite to the contrary, by the middle of the 17th century they were on a course of social and political upward mobility. They were more and more regularly included in the city councils and in the prestigious brotherhoods. They also obtained high ranks in the militia.

Between the two factions at the top, there were meeting points and issues of rivalry. On the one hand, they combined to form the colonial dominating block which presided over the masses of slaves and freemen of lower social standing. Their rising wealth eased merchants' entry into the colonial elite. Through marriage and the purchase of land, many merchants also became plantation owners in the Northeast, and the distinction between merchants and planters was sometimes blurred.

On the other hand, there were reasons for potential conflicts. Wealthy merchants were able to manipulate prices for import and